

5/16/16

Hoosick Falls – EPA and State Engagement

Overview:

Since Region 2 contacted the Mayor of Hoosick Falls in November 2015 regarding the PFOA contamination in the Village's public water supply, we have been actively engaged with the Hoosick Falls community and the State of New York. This includes Congressman Gibson's office, as well as the U.S. Senate delegation in New York and local and state elected officials, stakeholders and media who have been contacted on a regular basis about EPA actions to address this issue.

Engagement Highlights:

EPA Region 2 has met with and had numerous phone calls and exchanges of information with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) regarding the Hoosick Falls PFOA issue. We have also had frequent contacts with the Village of Hoosick Falls and the Town of Hoosick.

On November 25, 2015, EPA sent a detailed letter to Village of Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge concerning the PFOA contamination in the Village's public water system. Our letter made a number of recommendations, including that an alternative drinking water source (for example, bottled water) should be provided to the users of the public water supply until the PFOA levels are consistently below EPA's provisional health advisory level.

On December 17, 2015, EPA issued a statement on the Hoosick Falls water contamination. In it, EPA recommended that people not drink the water from the Village's water supply or use it for cooking.

On December 18, 2015, EPA established a public Hoosick Falls Water Contamination web page, <https://www.epa.gov/ny/hoosick-falls-water-contamination>, which provides an overview of EPA activities, key findings and documents. Since that time, EPA has posted a series of updates on the web page, and has shared these status reports with Congressional and state and local officials, stakeholders and the media. EPA also assigned a community involvement coordinator to respond to the large volume of public inquiries from the Hoosick Falls community and the media.

On January 14, 2016, Regional Administrator Judith Enck and Region 2 staff participated in a public meeting in Hoosick Falls that was attended by more than 700 people. In conjunction with the meeting, EPA also released a set of Questions and Answers relating to PFOA issues.

On January 28, 2016, in response to public inquiries, EPA issued a statement to the community, focused on users of private drinking water wells in the Town of Hoosick. The statement said that while EPA's work to develop a lifetime health advisory level for PFOA continues, the Agency recommends that those with private wells in the Town of Hoosick at which PFOA has been found to be present above 100 parts per trillion not use that water for drinking or cooking, and instead take advantage of the free bottled water that is being made available. In addition, the statement recommended that those whose private wells had not yet been tested for the presence of PFOA ask NYSDOH to test their well and, in the meantime, take advantage of the free bottled water being made available.

In February 2016, EPA conducted soil sampling in Little League fields near one of the suspected sources of the PFOA contamination. In April, EPA announced the results, indicating the fields do not contain contaminant levels of any concern. EPA is also conducting two other sampling efforts in Hoosick Falls: 1) soil and water

sampling to help the Agency evaluate the site for possible listing on the National Priorities List (as the State had requested in a 1/14/16 letter); and 2) soil sampling in residential yards and certain other properties to determine whether they have been impacted by PFOA releases from the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. plant on McCaffrey Street in the Village. We continue to keep the community informed.

On April 6, 2016, the Regional Administrator also sent a letter to the Mayor of Hoosick Falls, providing answers to a number of questions he had posed about the roles that EPA and the two state agencies will play in addressing the PFOA problem.

New York State Involvement:

On January 14, 2016, NYSDEC wrote to Administrator McCarthy, asking that EPA: 1) lower the provisional health advisory of 400 ppt for PFOA; 2) set an MCL for PFOA; 3) list PFOA as a hazardous substance under CERCLA; and 4) review the remaining uses of PFOA under TSCA and curtail its use. Acting Deputy Administrator Meiburg responded to this letter on March 22, 2016. In addition, on March 10, 2016, Governor Cuomo of New York, along with the Vermont and New Hampshire governors, wrote to the EPA Administrator, urging that EPA provide uniform guidance to the states regarding PFOA in drinking water and provide help for additional drinking water testing and analysis in communities exposed to PFOA, and also recommending greater federal investment in the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds. The Administrator responded to this letter on April 12, 2016.

Saint-Gobain has paid for a temporary granular activated carbon (GAC) system to be installed on the Village of Hoosick Falls' water supply. With NYSDOH's approval, this system is now in operation and successfully removing PFOA from the water supply. Saint-Gobain is also funding the construction of a long-term GAC system, which is expected to be operational this fall. At the same time, the State is working with the Village to find an alternative permanent drinking water supply to take the place of the current public supply wells.

NYSDOH has also offered to test the private well of every residence in the Town of Hoosick, upon request, to determine if PFOA contamination is present, and has also offered to install Point of Entry Treatment (POET) systems on such wells. Hundreds of the wells have been tested, and hundreds of POET systems have been installed. NYSDOH has also collected blood samples of hundreds of community residents to check for PFOA levels in blood serum. The results are pending.

NYSDEC is negotiating settlement agreements with two potentially responsible parties, Saint-Gobain and Honeywell, whereby the companies will conduct detailed environmental investigations to determine the nature and extent of the PFOA contamination, identify remedial options, and conduct and/or pay for additional measures.

Congressman Gibson's Request:

On May 10, 2016, Congressman Chris Gibson, whose district includes Hoosick Falls, wrote to Cong. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, asking that the committee look into the Hoosick Falls matter. See http://gibson.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_to_chairman_chaffetz.pdf. Gibson said in a statement, "Although there have been actions taken to address these problems, many of my constituents are deeply concerned with potential ongoing health risks to their families, delayed and confused responses by the state and federal agencies involved, and lack of accountability to find out what happened and why it was allowed to go on after the initial detection of the contamination of their water supply."